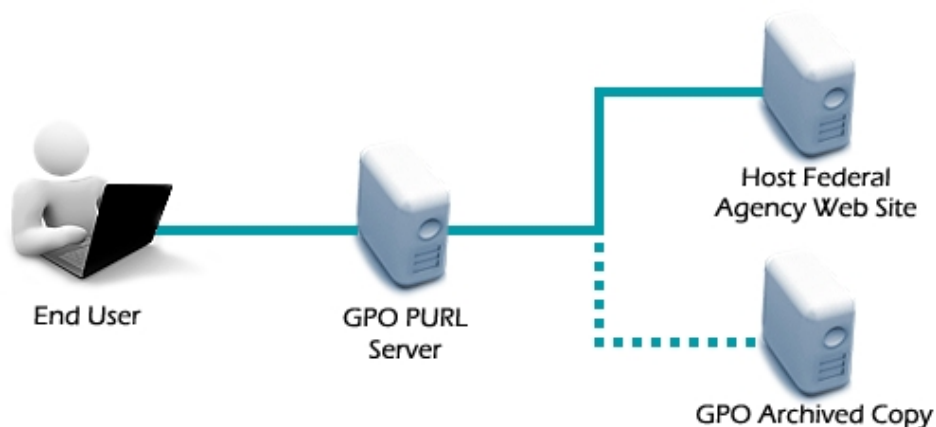




Linking to Federal Resources Using Persistent Uniform Resource Locators (PURLs)

Since March 1998, the U.S. Government Printing Office has used persistent uniform resource locators (PURLs) to provide libraries and other parties stable URLs to online Federal information. If a user clicks on a PURL found on a library Web page or in a library catalog, the request will be routed to the host Federal agency Web site. Libraries do not need to update the PURLs in their catalog records or Web pages since GPO staff will modify PURL entries as the location of the Federal information changes and GPO's PURL server will route online traffic to the appropriate Web site.

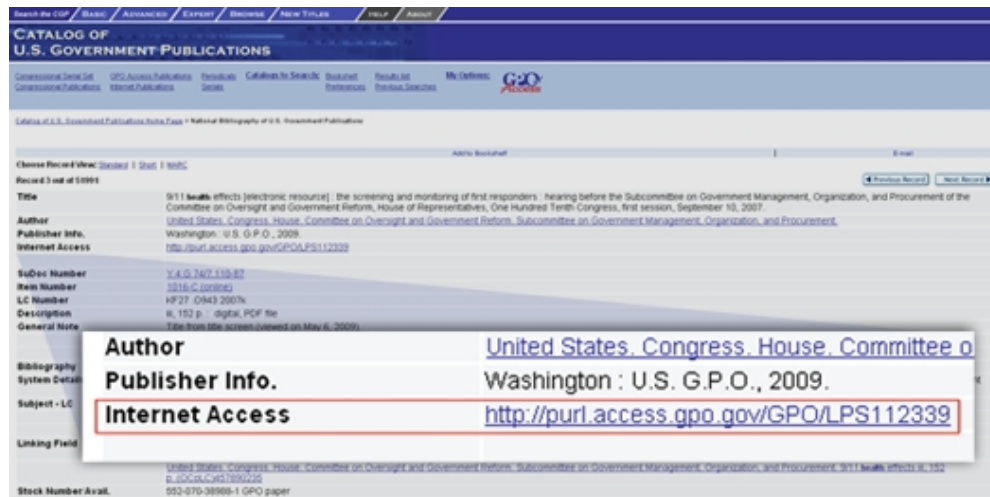


GPO performs routine maintenance on PURL records. Broken PURLs can be reported using [skGPO](#). If the Federal agency host removes the content from their Web pages altogether, GPO will modify the PURL to route online traffic to a copy on its own data repository if it has been “harvested” or archived. This will ensure that when a user visits the PURL it is always up-to-date with the most current information. If GPO cannot locate an online version of the Federal information, the PURL record will be modified to link to a page that states that as of a certain date that the information was no longer available online.

Using PURLs on Library Web Sites

Federal depository libraries are encouraged to use PURLs in their library catalogs and Web pages in order to ensure that links point to accurate, active Federal Web-based resources and publications and decrease the time required to maintain links.

To identify PURLs for inclusion in your library catalog or Web pages, use the [Catalog of U.S. Government Publications \(CGP\)](#) to determine if a publication or series has been assigned a PURL. A PURL will appear in the catalog record as well as any search results. Catalogers take note that GPO inserts the PURL in the 856 40 and 856 41 MARC field. Prior to October 2008, GPO followed a single record policy and the PURL will appear in both the tangible records and the electronic resource records. After October 2008, the PURL will appear only in the electronic resource record.



Example of a PURL as referenced in the standard view of a record in the CGP.

Tracking PURL Usage for Your Library

GPO provides statistical data on a monthly basis that reports the volume of click-throughs by both domain and IP address to online Federal resources through GPO's PURL server. Reports from November 2009 forward are available in comma separated value (csv) format. Reports prior to November, 2009 are available in a variety of formats, including HTML, PDF, and xls. Reports are available in the [file repository](#).

In 2009, Federal depository libraries expressed concerns that the referral statistics were being under-reported. Based on community concerns, GPO evaluated the PURL referral process to determine if abnormalities existed. After examining the log files, GPO determined that its PURL referral statistical reporting process was indeed correct based on the definition of a referral. A referral is the URL of a previous item which led to this request. However, after evaluating the information captured in the log files with how the Internet has evolved in recent years and in talking with members of the community, GPO modified its PURL referral reporting process to expand the definition of a referral, which provides more accurate PURL application usage statistics. As part of the new analysis, GPO analyzes data based on the remotehost field of the log file and compares it against the referrer and/or user-agent. A more detailed explanation of the reporting change can be found in [GPO Modifies PURL Referrals Reporting](#).

Consequently, GPO's PURL referral reports, prior to November 2009, provide click-through statistics for Federal depository libraries that met the industry standard definition of a referral and registered their domain with GPO for statistical reporting. Reports generated from November 2009 forward reports all click-through traffic and utilizes the expanded definition of a referral.

If a library needs more statistical information beyond the volume of PURL usage, the Federal depository library community has developed their own strategies to track in more detail what online resources are being used as part of their collection development purposes. Some of these strategies have been presented at various Federal Depository Library Council Meetings, including:

- * [FDLP: Staying or Leaving? Why We Don't Have to Make the Choice](#) (Fall 2009 DLC)
- * [Tracking Online Document Usage from the Catalog](#) (Fall 2009 DLC)



Link Checking in Libraries

GPO requests that Federal depository libraries be aware that ro(bot) services that are used to link check or validate PURLs can drain GPO's PURL server bandwidth and resources and negatively impact public use of the service. Please limit the use of these bots to non-production or non-business hours. GPO's non-production hours are 8PM through 5AM EST. In addition, GPO requests that queries be limited to no more than one page every 5 seconds. GPO will block offending bots, if necessary, to ensure public access of the PURL service. If your library users cannot access PURLs, it may be that your IP or domain has been blocked in order to ensure PURL application accessibility.

If your institution has been blocked from using PURLs and re-establish access, please fill out our [PURL Server Robot Protocol Adherence form](#) and adhere to our bot restrictions.